

single instance of manslaughter by elephants that I have had occasion to see, the animal had left the body of its victim on the ground and fully exposed to view. It is the habit of the carnivora, on the other hand, to secrete their meat against scavenging hyaenas and vultures by heaping up dry fallen leaves and twigs over it.

I am unable to say anything about the standard of intelligence of the African elephants because I have no knowledge of them in the wild state. But, from the meagre experience I have had with a pair of these animals in the Mysore zoo which used to be tethered sometimes in the forests of my forest division for grazing, and occasionally even for work, I can state that the African elephant, compared to the Indian, is wilder and more difficult to tame or train.

FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE,  
NEW FOREST, DEHRA DUN,  
September 4, 1953.

K. KADAMBI  
*Conservator of Forests*

## II. THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

*(With a photo)*

The snowman has again been in the news for some time and it may be of interest to examine the facts and theories which have been put forth in recent years.

We believe that the only instance in which the narrator claims to have personally seen a creature, later reported as a Snowman, and written about it is N. A. Tombazi, F.R.G.S., who in his 'Account of a Photographic Expedition to the Southern Glaciers of Kangchenjunga in the Sikkim Himalaya' writes:—

'I was preparing my instruments and cameras for the start when my attention was attracted by shouts outside the grotto; soon afterwards, the Sirdar and two of the coolies hurried to the tent with the news that a man had been sighted in the valley below. I rushed out—forgetting even to put on one of my snowboots—and gazed searchingly in the direction in which the Sirdar was pointing.

'The intense glare and brightness of the snow prevented me from seeing anything for the first few seconds; but I soon spotted the "object" referred to, about two to three hundred yards away down the valley to the East of our camp. Unquestionably, the figure in outline was exactly like a human being, walking upright and stopping occasionally to uproot or pull at some dwarf rhododendron bushes. It showed up dark against the snow and, as far as I could make out, wore no clothes. Within the next minute or so it had moved into some thick scrub and was lost to view.

'Such a fleeting glimpse, unfortunately, did not allow me to set the telephoto-camera, or even to fix the object carefully with the binoculars; but, a couple of hours later, during the descent, I purposely made a detour so as to pass over the place where the "man" or "beast" had been seen. I examined the foot-prints which were clearly visible on the surface of the snow. They were very similar in shape to those of a man, but only six to seven inches long by four

inches wide at the broadest part of the foot. The marks of five distinct toes and of the instep were perfectly clear; but the trace of the heel was indistinct, and the little that could be seen of it appeared to narrow down to a point. I counted fifteen such foot-prints at regular intervals ranging from one-and-a-half to two feet. The prints were undoubtedly of a biped, the order of the spoor having no characteristics whatever of any imaginable quadruped. Dense rhodo-



Snowman's Scalp

dendron scrub prevented any further investigations as to the direction of the foot-prints, and threatening weather compelled me to resume the march. From enquiries I made a few days later at Yoksun, on my return journey, I gathered that no man had gone in the direction of Jongri since the beginning of the year.

'When the news reached Darjeeling the press, as usual, headed their comments with captions of "Wild Man", "Snow Man", and the like, seen near Kangchenjunga by an "Italian" traveller. By the time the British and Continental papers had got the news, the length of the foot-prints had been more than doubled; and some ingenious young gentleman on the *Manchester Guardian* had produced a bird-theory out of his own fertile brain.

'When I asked the opinion of the Sirdar and the coolies they naturally trotted out fantastic legends of "Kangchenjunga-demons". Without in the least believing in these delicious fairy-tales myself, notwithstanding the plausible yarns told by the natives, and the references I have come across in many books, I am still at a loss to express any definite opinion on the subject. However, I can only reiterate with a sufficient degree of certainty that the silhouette of the mysterious

being was unmistakably identical with the outline of a human figure. I personally rejoice in particularly acute vision and am sufficiently familiar with the appearances of mountain fauna to be able to distinguish a bear, monkey, snow-leopard, ostrich, kiwi (if you like)—and even a man. I am also somewhat versed in the simple analysis of spoor, and can unhesitatingly state that the prints were those of no wild animal common to the Sikkim-Himalaya. It should be borne in mind that the foot of the Tibetan tribes is inclined to be short, flattened-out and wide across the toes.

'I have a theory, which may be worth consideration, if it be not thought too far fetched. Tibet and the contiguous countries are the very citadel of the Buddhist Faith, which in itself is actuated very largely, like the Early Christian Church, by the spirit of asceticism. The country of the Lamas is filled with monasteries; and we must remember that it is only civilisation and increased population that has favoured the cloistral community-system. In Early Church days anchoritism was well recognised and it seems reasonable to suppose that the Buddhist monks may well have turned to this form of mortification, in the same way as the ancient Christian hermits of the Syrian Desert.

'I conjecture, then, that this "wild man" may be either a solitary or else a member of an isolated community of pious Buddhist ascetics, who have renounced the world and sought their God in the utter desolation of some high place, as yet undesecrated by the World. However, perhaps I had better leave the conclusions to ethnological and other experts.'

More recently Eric Shipton the well-known Himalayan climber saw foot prints  $12\frac{1}{2}$  in. long in the snow at 12,000 ft. which the authorities at the British Museum apparently held were made by a langur, 'which when bounding puts its hind feet into the marks made by the front feet and lengthens them.' This information however is entirely based on newspaper reports.

A more startling aspect is put forward by Wilfred Noyce who in 'The Ascent of Everest' (*Asian Review*, April, 1954, page 128) writes:

'The Lamas of the monastery Thyangboche entertained us to tea, and with stories of that interesting gentleman the *Yeti* or Abominable Snowman. In the winter these creatures are seen near the monastery, playing in the snow. They kill yak, which they skin carefully and plant the horns in the ground. We are all firm believers in their existence.'

In 1952 Messrs. Navnit Parikh, Rusi Gandhi, J. A. Gaitonde and P. V. Pattankar of Bombay visited the Everest area through Nepal. Mr. Parikh reports that some of the Sherpas who accompanied them had actually seen this Snowman or *Yeti*. One of them related how he had locked himself in a hut when he saw one running towards him and that upon his coming out of the hut (after a suitable interval!) he had seen one of his yaks lying dead in a pool of blood. The *Yeti* was described as not more than 5 ft. in height and with reddish-brown hair all over his body and a conical shaped head. A

Lama at the monastery also related how in the winter of 1948 after heavy snowfall he heard the *Yeti* screaming and saw it come down from the slopes of Mt. Kangtega in the east. It did not come very near the monastery, but the Lama saw it walking on all fours and also stand up on its hind legs and scratch its chest with its arms. The Lama confirmed that the *Yeti* was a rather stunted animal with a conical head and with a lot of hair all over the body.

Mr. Parikh's party together with Dr. R. C. Evans of the British Everest Expedition visited the Pangboche Monastery where a junior Lama showed them a 'leather cap' which was said to be the scalp of the *Yeti* and used by the Lamas of the Gumpa during important rituals. The accompanying photograph was taken after a lot of persuasion after an offer of Rs. 500/- for the 'scalp' had been refused. Mr. Parikh obtained a hair from the scalp and also brought in the story of a living *Yeti* being kept in the zoo at Shigatse, the second largest town in Tibet and the seat of Panchan Lama.

The latter part of the story was put to Lama Angarika Govinda, (now resident in Devalali), who has some experience of that area, for his comments. In his reply he said that the news of a zoo at Shigatse is more fantastic than the report of the existence of the Snowman. He however added that 10 years ago the *Yeti* was seen in the outskirts of Siliguri when he was at Darjeeling and he heard many interesting details. The creature was seen by the engine driver of a goods train in the evening twilight, just before reaching Siliguri. He described it as a giant-like figure ambling along the railway track. Nobody would probably have taken notice of this report, if it had not happened the same night that a young woman heard somebody knocking at the door of her house. When she opened the door she saw the figure of a giant, whereupon she immediately shut the door with a scream and fainted with fright, thinking that Yama, the God of Death, had appeared before her. Nobody wanted to believe her, but the next morning enormous footprints were found in the soft mud. A friend of Angarika Govinda, a Mongolian Lama, whose name was Geshe Chomphel, happened to be at Siliguri at that time and took exact tracings of the footprints. He showed them to Lama Govinda who remembers that they were 8 inches wide and about 14 or 15 inches long. Their shape was that of a rather clumsy (human) foot, the heel almost as broad as the front-part, the toes very short and indistinct. Lama Govinda adds:

'Lama Chomphel left India long ago, but it is possible that he left the drawing of the footprint in the Allahabad Municipal Museum, where several of his drawings were kept in the ethnological hall of the Museum. Lama Chomphel was an artist as well as a writer of high qualification (he wrote in Tibetan as also in English). I have therefore no doubt in the accuracy of his investigations.'

A letter of enquiry to the Curator, Allahabad Municipal Museum has not yet elicited any reply.

Other reports have attributed a 'peculiar whistling note' to this creature.

The hair from the scalp of the 'Snowman' procured by Mr. Parikh was examined by Dr. Leon August Hausman, M.A., Ph.D., Department of Zoology, New Jersey College for Women, U.S.A.,

who is an authority on hairs of all kinds. In his initial report he said that under the microscope the structural elements of the hairshaft agreed with those of an *Ursus* or of an anthropoid of some sort (not *Homo*). He compared it with hair from the dorsum and head of Langurs (*Presbytis* or *Semnopithecus*), Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*) and the Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*) and could not match it with any of them. After seeing the photograph he said that the so-called 'scalp' could well be the moulded and sewed artifact from some mammal, which may have been brought in by a traveller and may not belong to a Tibetan species at all. The identification of the hair therefore appears impossible, though it may be worth recording that in an earlier letter Dr. Hausman had said: 'Its cuticle is uniformly stained—this is an artificial feature, not a natural one—as mammalian hairs are not colored in this way (except by skin gland secretions—and this is none of these). The coloration, thus produced, reminds me of the color and mode of coloring of hairs I have examined from early Egyptian and Peruvian sepulchres'.

The story of this hair was perhaps responsible for the recent 'Daily Mail' Expedition in search of this strange creature. The party failed to find the Snowman, and we have now to wait for something more definite to turn up.

EDITORS

## 12. THE OCCURRENCE OF THE CRESTED BUNTING (*MELOPHUS LATHAMI*) IN SAURASHTRA

While in the Gir Forest with M. K. Dharmakumarsinhji we saw a single female Crested Bunting on the Hiran River at Sasan on 7-4-54. I believe this is the first record of the bird from Saurashtra. Information regarding its movements in the plains of Gujerat is needed.

JASDAN,  
April 23, 1954.

Y. S. SHIVRAJKUMAR

## 13. AN INTELLIGENT MYNA

On July 14th at 2.30 p.m., I threw a piece of stale bread on the terrace of our neighbour's house from our window and was watching whether any bird would come and take it. There was a pair of Common Mynas nearby. One of them picked it up in its beak and was about to fly off when the other raised the harsh call generally uttered as alarm. I saw 5 or 6 House Crows coming swooping down. The myna with the crumb of bread in its beak hopped to the nearest bamboo pole (one of the many stored on the terrace) and tucked it inside the hollow end and perched above on the bamboo. After the crows had flown away the myna jumped down, carefully surveyed in all directions, put its beak inside the hole and took out the bread. Then the pair shared the hearty meal.

c/o DR. M. V. N. MURTHY,  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,  
CALCUTTA-13,  
July 22, 1954.

MRS. SYAMALA MURTHY.